

## PART IV

## THE PATTERN OF AGRICULTURE

Farms - Number and Size

According to the Census of Agriculture, there were 1,824 farms in Whitman County in 1959. This was 137 less than was enumerated five years earlier in 1954. The Census definition of a farm in 1959 was more restrictive than in 1954 and this accounted for part of the reduction in the number of farms between the two Census years. In Whitman County, the decrease in number of farms which resulted from the change in farm definition from 1954 to 1959 was 86. Census data indicate that the peak number of farms was reached around 1910 when there were 3,096 farms. The trend in number of farms has been downward since then. In 1959, with 1,824 farms, Whitman County ranked ninth in the state in the number of farms.

Whitman is a county of large farms. In 1959, over one-half of the farms in the county contained over 500 acres and about 22 percent were units of more than 1,000 acres. Farms under 10 acres accounted for only 5 percent of the total. The average size of farm in Whitman County was 814 acres compared with 363 for the state. Whitman ranked eleventh among Washington counties in average size per farm in 1959.

Table 9. Farms, Number and Average Size, Land in Farms  
Whitman County, 1900-1959

Year	Total Farms in the County	Average Size of farms in the County (acres)	Total County Area in Farms (acres)	Percent of County area in Farms
1900	3,081	379.3	1,168,817	84.2
1910	3,096	383.4	1,187,966	85.6
1920	2,957	423.6	1,252,485	90.3
1925	2,858	413.6	1,182,121	85.2
1930	2,631	495.5	1,303,748	94.0
1940	2,537	532.9	1,351,907	97.4
1945	2,293	609.6	1,397,890	98.0
1950	2,018	670.9	1,353,876	97.6
1954	1,961	723.6	1,419,001	98.5
1959	1,824	814.5	1,485,709	107.1 <sup>1/</sup>

<sup>1/</sup> The excess of farm acreage over approximate land area is due to the fact that the entire acreage of a farm is tabulated as in the county in which the headquarters is located even though a part of the farm may be situated in an adjoining county.

Source: U. S. Census of Agriculture.

Between 1954 and 1959, farm numbers in several size group categories showed a decline in Whitman County. The largest reduction in numbers involved farms under 10 acres. For this group much of the drop was the result of the change in Census definition. Farms between 100 and 499 acres also declined in numbers during the same period with the largest reduction in the 260 to 499 acre units. The number of farms between 10 to 49 acres increased between 1954 and 1959. Farms

over 500 acres also increased in number during the same five year period. For the larger farms there has been a tendency to consolidate with the objective of increasing efficiency, especially where mechanization is involved.

The overall trend in total farm acreage in Whitman County has continued upward since the turn of the century. In 1900, land in farms amounted to 1,168,817 acres. Farmland reached 1,419,001 acres in 1959--an all time high. In 1959, the Census of Agriculture indicated that farmland operated by Whitman County farmers represented 107 percent of the county land area. The apparent excess of the farm acreage over approximate land area of the county resulted from the fact that the entire acreage of a farm was tabulated as in the county in which the headquarters was located, even though a part of the farm might have been situated in an adjoining county.

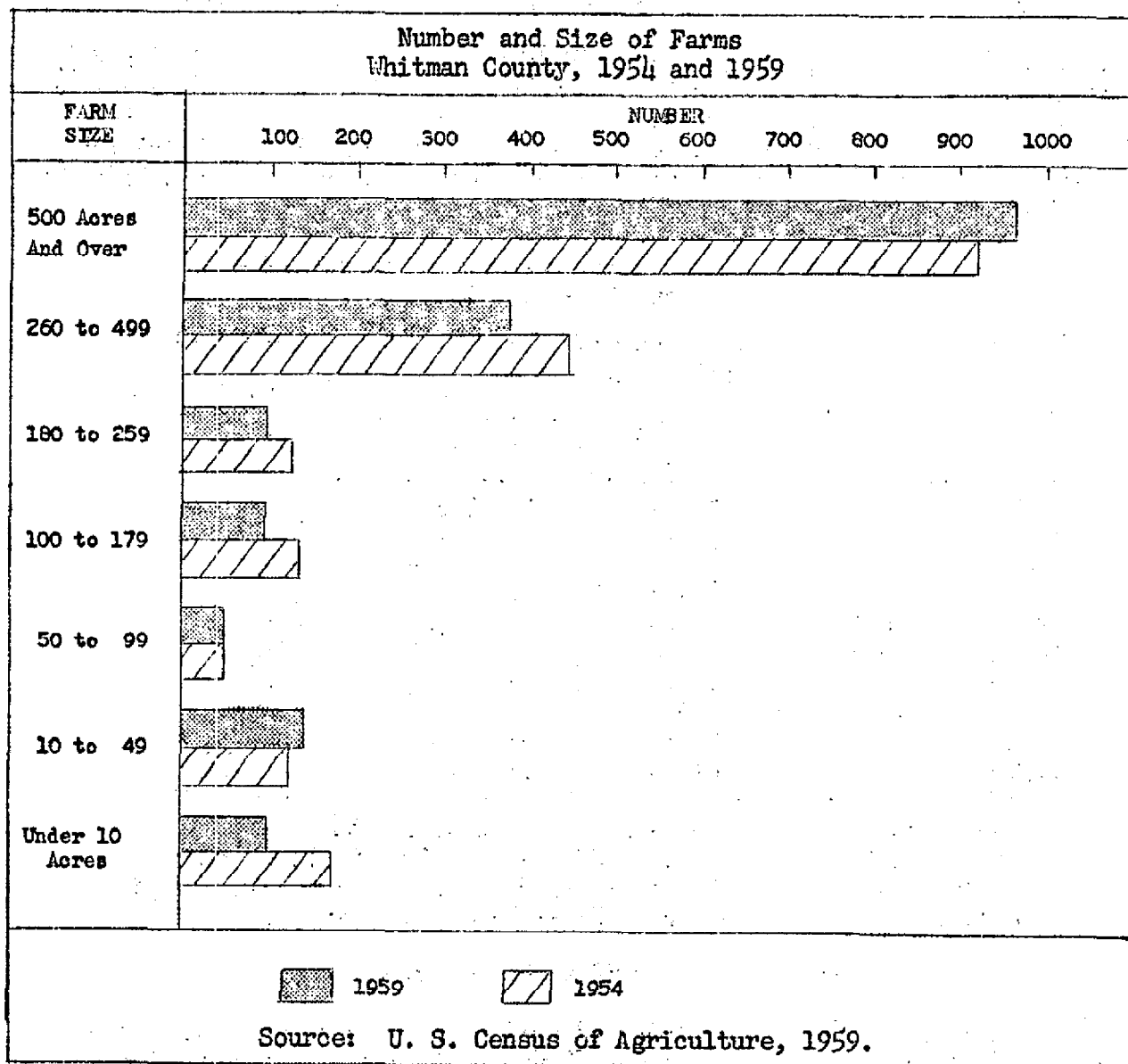


Figure 7. Number and Size of Whitman County Farms, 1954 and 1959.

In 1959, about 60 percent of the farmland operated by Whitman County farmers was in units of 1,000 acres or more. Farms under 50 acres represented only .2 percent of the total farmland. Many farms of 1,000 acres or more contain large acreages of scabland, range and fallow land as well as grain and other crops.

### Types of Farms

Whitman County has a wide variety of farm types, according to the Census of Agriculture. The most common type of farm in the county specializes in field crops and particularly in cash grain. In 1959, the Census estimated that over 78 percent of the farms were cash-grain operations. The estimated number was 1,452 units. Next in numbers were livestock farms which added up to 114 units or 6 percent of the total farm figure. General farms numbered 19 in 1959 and represented 1 percent of the county farm count. (Census defined general farms as those growing field seed crops, hay and/or silage. A farm was also classified as general if it had cash income from three or more sources and did not meet the criteria for any other type.)

Poultry and dairy farms both totaled 15 in 1959 each representing slightly less than one percent of the total number of farms in the county. Also in 1959, only 6 farms were in the fruit and nut category. About 12 percent of the Whitman County farms were classified as miscellaneous by the Census. This category included farms raising nursery and greenhouse products, forest products, mules, horses, colts and ponies.

Table 10. Types of Farms, Whitman County, 1959

Type of Farm	Estimated Number of Farms	Percent of all farms in the county	
		1954	1959
Total farms in county .....	1,854	100.0	100.0
Field crop farms .....	1,452	77.3	78.3
Cash-grain .....	1,452	77.3	78.3
Other field-crop .....	--	--	--
Vegetable farms .....	1	--	.1
Fruit-and-nut farms .....	6	.2	.3
Poultry farms .....	15	2.3	.8
Dairy farms .....	15	.2	.8
Livestock farms other than poultry and dairy	114	5.4	6.1
General farms .....	19	1.5	1.0
Miscellaneous and unclassified farms .....	232	13.0	12.5

Source: U. S. Census of Agriculture.

Some farm types in Whitman County have increased in numbers in recent years while others have decreased. Dairy farms increased by 10 units between 1954 and 1959 and represented the category with the largest increase during this period. There were also 8 more livestock farms enumerated in 1959 than in 1954.

Between 1954 and 1959, field crop farms dropped 71 units, from 1,523 to 1,452 while poultry farms decreased by 30 operations. Also, there were 24 less miscellaneous and unclassified farms and 11 less general farms in 1959 than in 1954.

### Farm Residence and Operation

In 1959, about 34 percent of the Whitman County farm operators worked off their farms. Approximately 15 percent worked off the farms more than 100 days per year. On an income basis, 13 percent of the operators and their families gained more cash income from off-farm work than was received from farm products marketed from their own farms.

The majority of Whitman County farmers live on the farms they operate. Nearly 87 percent of the farmers reported living on the farms they operated in 1959. Others lived in nearby villages and towns.

### Farmland Utilization

Crops were harvested from about 45 percent of the land in farms in 1959. An additional 24 percent was in summerfallow or idle cropland while 2 percent was in pastured cropland. Thus, cropland accounted for over 71 percent of the land in farms in 1959. Woodlands constituted only 3 percent of Whitman County's total farmland in 1959. About 84 percent of the farm woodland was pastured. Other pasture amounted to 24 percent of the county farmland. The remaining farmland, about 2 percent, was in house lots, roads, wasteland, etc.

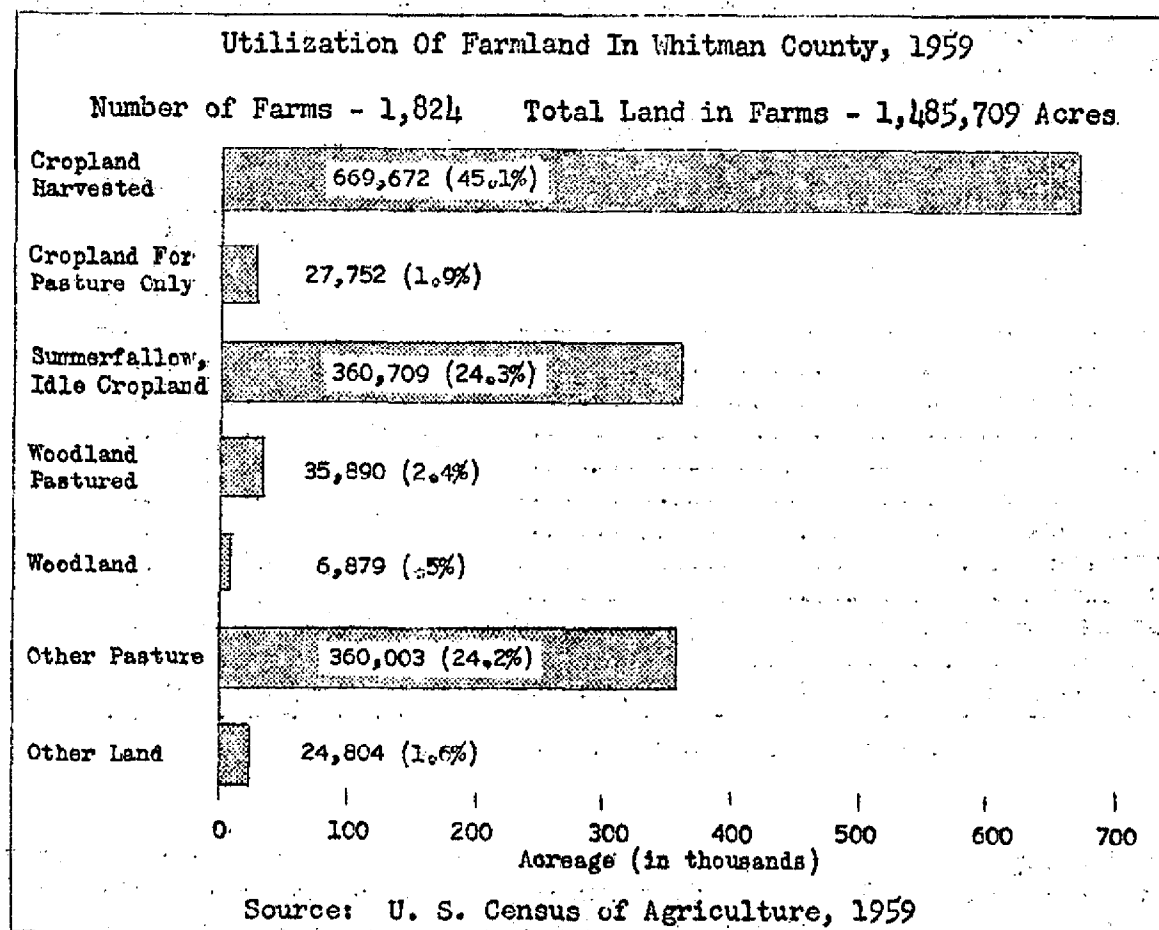


Figure 8. Utilization of Farmland in Whitman County, 1959.

### Farm Values

The value of farm lands and buildings in Whitman County has increased greatly since 1900. After reaching a high in 1920, farm values decreased during depression years of the 1930's. Since 1940, however, the total value of farm property in the county has increased from about \$68,000,000 to more than \$296,000,000 in 1959. According to the Census of Agriculture, the average value of land and buildings per farm increased from a low of \$26,795, in 1940 to \$162,282 in 1959. Value of farmland per acre during the same period rose from \$50.28 to \$193.92. In 1959, Whitman ranked first among all Washington counties in the average value of farms and ranches.

Table 11. Value of Farm Land and Buildings  
Whitman County, 1900-1959

Year	Total Value All Farm Property in County	County Average Values	
		Per Farm (dollars)	Per Acre (dollars)
1900	16,573,690	5,379	14.18
1910	59,402,045	19,187	50.00
1920	123,082,972	41,624	98.27
1930	80,822,715	30,719	61.99
1940	67,978,332	26,795	50.28
1950	172,968,834	85,713	135.37
1954	224,746,288	114,608	155.76
1959	296,002,368	162,282	193.92

Source: U. S. Census of Agriculture.

The rise in farm land values has been caused by several factors. One has been the general increase of prices in real estate throughout the western United States. Another factor has been the large amount of labor and capital Whitman County farmers have invested in land and building improvements. A third factor has been the increase in population and the expansion of commercial farming which has increased demands for farm land.

### Farm Tenure

Nearly 31 percent of the farmers in Whitman County owned the farm they operated in 1959. Full owners controlled about 17 percent of the county's total farmland in that year. About 38 percent of the farms were operated by part owners --farmers who own part of their land and rent land from others. Unlike the full-owner farms which have steadily decreased in number since 1935, part owner operations in the county have increased, numbering around 700 in recent years. About 53 percent of Whitman County's farmland in 1959 was under the part-owner type of operation. This type of operation is common in wheat farming where machinery makes large units practical and more economical to run. Many senior citizens in the area arrange to have parts of their farms operated by neighboring ranchers.

Table 12. Farm Tenancy, Number and Percent of Farms  
by Tenure of Operator, Whitman County, 1925-1959

Year	Number of Farms	Full Owners		Part Owners		Managers		Tenants	
		Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
1925	2,858	1,140	39.8	543	19.0	31	1.0	1,144	40.0
1930	2,631	910	34.6	629	23.9	24	.9	1,099	41.4
1935	2,751	1,007	36.6	592	21.5	30	1.0	1,091	39.6
1940	2,537	984	38.7	683	26.9	24	.9	866	34.1
1945	2,293	937	40.8	632	27.5	14	.6	710	31.0
1950	2,015	701	34.3	658	32.3	21	1.0	638	31.6
1954	1,961	680	34.7	652	33.2	13	.7	616	31.4
1959	1,824	562	30.8	699	38.3	16	.9	547	30.0

Source: U. S. Census of Agriculture.

Tenancy--the renting and leasing of land--is also a common practice in Whitman County. Although the number has continued to decrease since the 1920's, tenant farms numbered 547 in 1959, about 30 percent of the total number of farms in the county. Tenant farmers operated around 23 percent of the county's farmland during 1959. The overall trend in the number of manager-operated farms has been downward since the 1920's. In 1959, there were only 16 farms operated by managers and they represented less than one percent of all farms in the county. Managers--individuals who manage land for others and who receive a wage or salary for services--operated about 7 percent of the county's farmland acreage in 1959. Manager farms tend to be large-scale operations with large acreages.

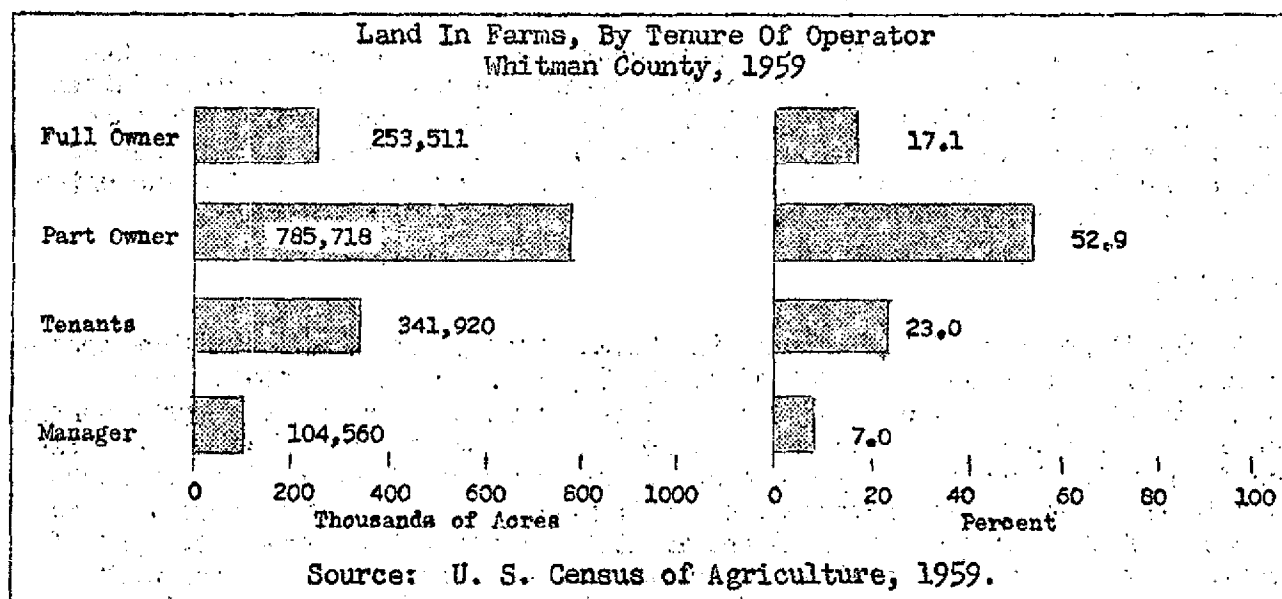


Figure 9. Land in Farms, By Tenure of Operator, Whitman County, 1959.

### Irrigation

Dryland farming dominates Whitman County agriculture, but the amount of irrigated cropland and pasture in the county has been increased in recent years. However, irrigated land still represents a minor part of the area's farmlands.

In 1959, 8,662 acres were under irrigation compared with 2,045 acres in 1950. Whitman ranked sixteenth in amount of land irrigated among the 39 Washington counties in 1959. About 8 percent of the county farms had some irrigation in that year. Land irrigated represented only .6 percent of the county land in farms in 1959.

Table 13. Irrigated Farms: Number and Acreage  
Whitman County, 1950, 1954 and 1959

Item	1950	1954	1959
Number of irrigated farms .....	59	146	155
Land irrigated (acres) .....	2,045	11,914	8,662
Irrigated land in farms according to use:			
Farms irrigating crops .....	53	124	121
Acres of crops irrigated .....	1,716	9,314	5,536
Acres of other land irrigated .....	296	2,600	3,126

Source: U. S. Census of Agriculture.

In 1959, nearly 64 percent of Whitman County's irrigated acreage was in crops. Most of the remaining land irrigated was pasture. In terms of acreage, alfalfa was the leading irrigated crop in 1959. Other important crops grown under irrigation included tree fruits, small grains and hay other than alfalfa. Most of the irrigation in the county is done by sprinklers with the water coming from ground water or surface sources on the farms.

#### Farm Facilities

The capacity of a farmer to produce is significantly related to farm equipment and facilities at his disposal. Whitman County farms are relatively well-equipped with modern farm machinery. Home conveniences such as telephones and home freezers are common. Tractors, motor trucks and automobiles are found on majority of Whitman County farms. In 1959, nearly 90 percent of the farms reported 3,775 tractors of which 2,388 were of the crawler type. The number of farms with automobiles was 1,757 which represented nearly 95 percent of the Whitman County farms. About 91 percent of the farms also had motor trucks in 1959.

The importance of wheat and barley in the county is indicated by the relatively high frequency of grain combines noted by the Census in 1959. There was also a large number of farms with power operated elevators, conveyors and blowers and pick-up balers.

Table 14. Specified Facilities and Equipment on Farms  
Whitman County, 1959

Facility or Equipment Item	Number of Farms Using	Percent of All Farms in County Equipped
Telephone .....	1,737	93.7
Home freezer .....	1,548	83.5
Milking machine .....	166	9.0
Electric milk cooler ...	36	1.9
Crop drier (for grain, forage or other crops) ..	12	.6
Power operated elevator, conveyor or blower .....	665	35.9
Grain combines .....	1,304	70.3
Corn pickers .....	1	.1
Pick-up baler .....	471	25.4
Field forage harvester ..	99	5.3
Motortrucks .....	1,688	91.0
Tractors .....	1,652	89.1
Crawler tractors .....	1,533	82.7
Automobiles .....	1,757	94.8

Source: U. S. Census of Agriculture, 1959.

#### Farm Roads

In recent years, much progress has been made in providing all-weather roads for farm families. Most of the farms are located within easy access of the main highways in Whitman County. In 1959, 18 percent of the farms were located on hard-surfaced roads. Only 7 percent of the farmsteads required travel on dirt roads while the remaining three-fourths of the farms were on improved roads of gravel, shell or shale. Over 70 percent of the few farms situated on dirt roads were located within 4 miles to a hard-surface road.